

## Tales From the Trail

The woods were ringing with the beautiful song of Hermit Thrushes. I took in a deep breath of crisp mountain air, filling my lungs. The aroma of pine needles and fresh sap lingered in the air. The world was silent except for the peacefully singing birds.

To me, hiking is about experiencing nature and rejuvenating the soul. When I step into the forest and look around me, my head clears, like a rebirth of my health. I'm always reluctant to head home after a day on the trail, but I never fail to return with a crystal clear mind and renewed spirits.

I took a look at my surroundings and slowly sat on a damp moss-covered log. A chickaree scampered past and scolded me loudly from a branch. A Steller's Jay screamed incessantly in the distance. The day was warm and sunny, but the tall fir trees left the forest floor checkered in shadows. Craning my neck upwards, I stare in awe at the towering treetops. The straight and deeply-grooved trunks stretch skyward unfolding into a tangled canopy of branches.

Suddenly a weasel dashed out from the undergrowth, a mouse grasped in its mouth. It bounded past, a white-tipped tail flying behind it. The weasel approached again, slowly this time, and gently set the mouse at my feet before scampering away. It returned again, cautiously, and pounced on the mouse before grabbing it and running off for good.

Amazed by the weasel, I stood up to explore further down the trail. I carefully hopped from rock to rock across a gushing stream. I paused for a moment to take a drink from the cold, clear, rushing water. I wandered through lush meadows exploding with wildflowers of every color from magenta to violet. As I rounded a bend in the trail, a mom deer and her fawn bounded away.

When I finally reached my destination, I set down my backpack and plopped down on a broad flat rock. Towering mountains stretched past the horizon, etched with deep forested valleys and speckled with meadows and ponds. The vista was breathtaking and endless, set with a background of a cloudless sky.

As the sun began to drift slowly towards the horizon, I realized it was time to head back. I was sad to head home down the winding trail, but that perfect day of solitude and natural wonders is one I'll never forget.